

I was proud to support the inclusion of Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into NATO. I am also supportive of the aspiration of others to join that Alliance and to make the democratic and budgetary reforms necessary to bolster their candidacy.

I am proud that seven other nations, including Bulgaria and Romania, are candidates for membership.

By deploying U.S. forces to new locations to the East or South of Germany, to nations that enjoy new or prospective membership in NATO, we would demonstrate our firm commitment to those countries.

Doing so would also reflect new geopolitical realities: first, we have cooperative and constructive relations with Russia, and secondly, points to the south of Europe will continue to require more of our attention.

As Secretary Rumsfeld has noted, while ties between the people of Germany and America remain strong, on a governmental level, our bilateral relations are increasingly out of sync.

I couldn't agree more.

Well before Mr. Schroeder began his attacks on President Bush and before the incessant German criticism of the administration's efforts to combat terrorism and the threat posed by Iraq—Germany had imposed increasing and burdensome restrictions on the way the U.S. military could maneuver and train in Germany.

Basing and operating costs in Germany one of the most industrialized and rich nations of Europe are high. Though start-up costs of relocating some U.S. forces to countries such as Poland or Romania might be high, over time such relocation would present savings.

Some Eastern or Southern European countries would be keen to host U.S. forces, either permanently or on a rotating basis.

They would welcome a U.S. military presence for the strategic and political dividends involved, and not least for the positive economic impact that this would entail. They would welcome us in the spirit of friendship.

In particular, I think the administration should strongly consider redeploying NATO forces to Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Poland has bases and training grounds well-suited for U.S. military training, while Romania and Bulgaria are both in the process of upgrading their bases under the terms of their NATO membership.

Operating with fewer restrictions than on German bases will allow American troops to train more effectively, thus maintaining military readiness at the highest possible level.

Redeployment of U.S. forces to Romania and/or Bulgaria would ease strategic pressure on Turkey, a vital American ally.

With its location near the center of the world's least stable regions, we should not leave Ankara to stand as the sole pressure point when the U.S. projects forces eastward and southward from Europe.

Someday the political situation might force even a generally friendly Turkish government to resist America using Turkey as a staging point. American bases in Bulgaria and Romania would shift some of the burden from this hard-pressed American friend.

Likewise, bases in Bulgaria and Romania would provide the Turks, who will remain key partners in the new era, the diplomatic cover to continue to assist the U.S.

Nations that have escaped the yoke of communism in Central and Southern Europe have been among the most active and outspoken supporters of U.S. policy particularly the global war on terrorism and U.S. efforts to contain Iraq and North Korea.

Perhaps that is because these nations, unlike their continental neighbors to the West, know what it is like to live without security, freedom and democracy.

As we move forward on this critical issue, Congress should authorize and the Administration should thoroughly study, the military and financial implications of European redeployment.

It is also an issue to broach with the Russian Federation, as it may require renegotiation of the Treaty Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. We must emphasize that it is not directed at Moscow but rather can form the basis of a closer NATO-Russia relationship.

I would note that a few days ago, Senators SHELBY, BUNNING, ALLARD, COLLINS, SESSIONS, BROWNBACK, MCCAIN, KYL, HUTCHINSON, CRAIG, ENSIGN, SANTORUM, WARNER and I sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld requesting that the Department of Defense undertake an immediate study of U.S. bases in Europe that should be geared to U.S. national interests.

We asked that issues considered in such a study include, but not be limited to: force structure, length of deployment, infrastructure, dependents and dependent housing and services, and costs regardless of category.

I believe that was a good first step toward thinking about the issue of deployment of our forces in Europe. I think that we should do more on this issue and I will work towards that end.

THE MEDICARE INCENTIVE PAYMENT PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I am pleased to introduce S. 379, the Medicare Incentive Payment Program Improvement Act of 2003, with my distinguished colleague, Senator BINGAMAN. This legislation makes important improvements to the current Medicare Incentive Payment (MIP) Program. These refinements will go a long way in ensuring eligible rural physicians receive the Medicare bonus payment to which they are entitled.

The Medicare Incentive Payment Program was created in 1987 under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act to

serve as an incentive tool to recruit physicians to practice in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) by providing a 10 percent Medicare bonus payment. There are approximately 2,800 federally designated HPSAs—75 percent of which are located in rural areas. In my State of Wyoming, over half of the counties are designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area and have a difficult time recruiting physicians.

Unfortunately, this well-intended program has not worked well due to the burden it places on providers. Under the current MIP programmatic structure, physicians are required to determine if the patient encounter occurred in designated underserved areas, they must attach a code modifier to the billing claim and must undergo a stringent audit. Additionally, there is evidence that many physicians who would be eligible are not even aware of the program.

The legislation we are introducing today alleviates the administrative burden on rural physicians by requiring Medicare carriers to determine eligibility. The Medicare Incentive Payment Program Improvement Act of 2003 also requires the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to establish a MIP education program for providers and establishes ongoing analysis of the MIP program's ability to improve access to physician services for Medicare beneficiaries.

All physicians are struggling with last year's Medicare payment reduction of 5.4 percent and with the possibility of another 4.4 percent reduction on March 1 of this year. These payment cuts combined with an ever-increasing regulatory burden to participate in the Medicare program and escalating medical malpractice premiums have begun to impact seniors' access to care. As rural providers tend to be disproportionately impacted by Medicare payment cuts, it has never been more important to ensure that the few rural physician incentive programs that exist have a positive effect on the stability of our rural health care delivery system. I strongly urge all my Senate colleagues interested in rural health to cosponsor the Medicare Incentive Payment Improvement Act of 2003

CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I came to Congress in 1975 and served in the House until 1984, when I was elected to the Senate. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee and later the Senate Agriculture Committee I have always known the importance of agriculture conservation. My home State of Iowa is rich in agriculture and also rich in the tradition of conservation.

But even in Iowa, we recognize the need for more conservation. For decades we had cost-share money available for producers through the Agriculture Conservation Program. But, it was not

until 1990 that a farm bill took the next critical step toward conservation by including my Water Quality Incentives Program. This program, for the first time in agriculture history, included incentive payments for producers. The basic concepts and principles of WQIP were the foundation for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, included in the 1996 farm bill. EQIP, which expanded beyond water quality to all natural resources, was a fundamental advancement for conservation on working lands.

However, even with these advances we were still spending over 90 percent of conservation dollars on land retirement programs, namely CRP and WRP. While these two programs are critically important, it became abundantly clear that conservation on working lands needed to be addressed. EQIP was hugely popular among farmers and ranchers, but the dollars were limited and many, many producers were left stranded—unable to access this program.

Moreover, a growing resentment from good conservationists was brewing over the EQIP funding. Too many good stewards of their lands were left out of the conservation programs. Those who worked hard, using their own resources and ingenuity, were not recognized by USDA agriculture conservation programs.

As I traveled the countryside, it became abundantly clear that change was necessary. I heard from many producers that we finally needed a good strong conservation program open to all producers, not just a few select producers. And, they told me that we needed a conservation program that rewarded those committed stewards of the land, instead of excluding them.

During the development of the farm bill, I continued to press for an expanded conservation title. To expand and improve the existing conservation programs and to finally add a new conservation program which I called the Conservation Security Program—a program to secure the right of all American farmers and ranchers to access conservation dollars to adopt and maintain conservation practices on their lands. We did not put a cap on the CSP so that all producers who would carry out conservation and meet the requirements could enroll in it. The CSP was a novel approach to conservation—it adopted the well-accepted full participation principle in our commodity programs. That is the most unique factor of CSP. I first proposed CSP in 1999 and over the next three years CSP evolved into the groundbreaking program that was included in the 2002 farm bill. Prior to the final product, the CSP was introduced in a bipartisan manner on both the House and the Senate in 2001.

Senator SMITH of Oregon and I worked hard on developing this important program. It took long hours of negotiation involving staff together with

major commodity groups, like the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Soybean Association, National Corn Growers Association, Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Defenders of Wildlife, Sierra Club and many others. Moreover, we worked extensively with the USDA. Eventually, we developed a program embraced by both commodity and conservation groups alike.

But, the evolution of CSP continued through the development of the farm bill. As the Senate worked on the farm bill, Senator LUGAR, Senator SMITH and I continued to modify the CSP to ensure that the environmental benefits were maximized and that farmer access was paramount. Senator LUGAR and I developed joint principles on the farm bill, including for the conservation title. While both Senator LUGAR and I vocally supported a strong conservation title, we took time to refine the CSP. As a result of our bipartisan work, the conservation title, including a CSP without an arbitrary funding limit of the Senate Agriculture Committee unanimously.

But, our work on the CSP was far from over. As we moved into conference with the House, we again worked to improve CSP. We worked tirelessly and carefully to refine the CSP and make sure that it was acceptable to all members of conference. This was not a simple process. The Farm bill conference took months, and the conservation title was debated during the entire process. I personally engaged in weeks of negotiations on the CSP. Because I understood the critical importance of including a CSP without a funding cap in the final bill, I made many concessions on the farm bill.

Finally, after months of debate, the conference agreed to include CSP as an uncapped program—one open to all producers who meet requirements of the program and one that would have a budget baseline in the future as the program grew. The farm bill was a carefully negotiated bill that required a delicate balancing of all concerns.

When President Bush signed the 2002 farm bill last May, we all celebrated the historic increase in conservation spending for existing and new programs. For the first time ever, the farm bill took a monumental step forward toward truly addressing conservation of natural resources on our farms and ranches in the form of the CSP.

The CSP, by its uncapped nature, ensured for the first time that all farmers and ranchers who meet the requirements may participate in an agriculture conservation program. Again, it was uncapped nature of this program that provided for this program that provided for this giant step for conservation—for both our farmers and ranchers and the environment.

I must restate that the CSP will generate real environment benefits. The design of CSP mandate these benefits. Producers are required to maintain or adopt conservation practices at the

highest level of all conservation programs.

Why else is CSP so important? For many reasons—It is the first program that provides a comprehensive approach covering the full range of conservation and environmental issues related to working lands, and enables participation based on one unified, site-specific conservation plan.

CSP helps rebalance conservation funding in support of incentives for land in production so that producers don't have to retireland and stop farming in order to benefit. CSP is open to producers of all types of crops and all parts of the country. CSP, for the first time, pays producers in recognition of the public nature resource and environmental benefits provided on working farms and ranches, including maintenance payments for active management of already adopted practices. And, CSP is compatible with our trade obligations under WTO.

That is why major commodity and conservation groups support CSP. Groups including, Cotton Council, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Corn Growers Association, National Farmers Union, National Milk Producers Federation, United Fresh Fruits & Vegetables, U.S. Rice Producers, American Farmland Trust, Defenders of Wildlife, National Association of Conservation Districts, National Audubon Society, Pheasants Forever, Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited, Union of Concerned Scientists and many more. Despite the Administration's contention that it supports voluntary conservation programs in the farm bill, we have found that their words are not matched by their actions. In fact, the Administration has actively worked to undermine conservation programs.

Just recently, the Administration described CSP as having "a unique role among USDA conservation programs. It identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who meet the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations, creates powerful incentives for other producers to meet those same standards of conservation performance on their operations, and provides public benefits for generations to come."

Despite this glowing endorsement, the Administration has attacked CSP—by proposing to cut back CSP to a strict \$2 billion for 10 years in the FY04 budget and by pushing to cap CSP to only \$3.77 billion in this omnibus appropriations bill. The manner in which the CSP was capped was unfair. It began with a small provision in the House agriculture appropriations bill by limiting CSP as a pilot program in FY03 in my home state of Iowa.

But as time went on and the majority developed an inadequate disaster bill—one that doesn't provide the necessary support farmers need, they decided they needed an offset for the program. So, for the first time, we have

now created a horrible precedent of requiring an offset for disaster payments. And, where did the Administration go for this offset? The farm bill which was just passed nine months ago. And, more importantly, what did the Administration attack first—the conservation title.

During the farm bill, the CSP was scored by CBO for \$2 billion, but as the popularity and producer support and excitement for this program grew, CBO rescored this program for significantly more. In fact, the most recent score for CSP is \$6.8 billion. Instead of seeing a wonderful vehicle to accomplish conservation on the ground, the Bush Administration viewed CSP as a cash cow—one to attack to pay for disaster payments. So, without any ability for debate, in the quiet of the night behind closed doors the Administration undermined the most important conservation program ever authorized—a conservation program open to all producers and capped the CSP. This cap fundamentally changes the CSP.

No longer can all producers have the security of knowing they can participate in a conservation program, no longer can the promised environmental benefits of the conservation title of the farm bill guaranteed. By capping this program—unintended restrictions on participation will follow and the baseline we worked so hard to develop and so carefully negotiated in the farm bill is gone. And, we have greatly hindered the most promising program we had for meeting our WTO obligations in the future.

It is clear today that the Administration is bent on undermining conservation practices and the CSP. It is clear that its words of praise for conservation cannot be reconciled with its destructive measures.

The colloquy between Senator STEVENS, Senator COCHRAN, Senator DASCHLE, Senator FRIST and me entered into on passage of the Omnibus Appropriations bill on February 13, will hopefully lead to correcting this mistake on the next supplemental appropriations bill.

I ask unanimous consent that a statement by Congressman GOODLATTE be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the House Agriculture Committee,
Feb. 13, 2003]

CHAIRMAN GOODLATTE'S STATEMENT CONCERNING THE FINAL OMNIBUS SPENDING BILL AND THE DROUGHT ASSISTANCE PROVISION

"We are pleased that the final drought assistance provision provides targeted disaster relief to those farmers who need it the most. It is my hope that this approach will help countless American farmers avoid devastating financial circumstances. I am pleased that it is paid for.

"However, the Committee is greatly concerned that it is paid for out of a carefully negotiated Farm Bill, and would have preferred that the funds had been found elsewhere. Breaking open the Farm Bill, before it has even been implemented, is a very seri-

ous matter. This is a dangerous precedent, which we strongly opposed throughout the course of these negotiations.

"This is a warning to farm legislators and the farm community at large to be vigilant. It will be a constant effort to ensure that the Farm Bill remains a valuable asset to America's farmers and ranchers. While this legislation will help farmers who are hurting right now, we must make certain that in providing this assistance, we don't harm American agriculture in the long term."

UNINSURED AMERICANS

Mr. SMITH. Madam President, as I rise today to speak before my colleagues in the 108th session of the US Congress, I have a sense of *deja vu*. While I have only been a member of the Senate since 1997, I have already seen the issues of prescription drugs for seniors and health care for the uninsured come and go—unresolved—a number of times. And while we continue to discuss the issues to death, people are dying.

According to a recent report by the Institute of Medicine, an estimated 18,000 people die every year because they don't have health insurance, and don't get the care they need in a timely fashion. Eighteen thousand deaths a year. And millions more people suffer unnecessarily due to delays in care, or lack of access to care. We need to do something substantial, and we need to do it now.

We have all heard the numbers, but they are so staggering that I have to mention them again. Today—right now as I speak—41 million Americans are living, working, and going to school without health insurance. That's one in every six Americans or 17 percent of our hard-working citizens who do not have health insurance. They are our friends, our neighbors, our children, our parents.

Many—more than 35 million of these uninsured Americans—are in low-income working families. Many people who work in small businesses are not offered health insurance, and those who are often cannot afford the skyrocketing premiums. My family owns a business, and I know what small businesses go through.

We want to provide health care to our hard working employees as much as they want us to offer it, but it is becoming so expensive and so bureaucratic, it grows more difficult every year. This Congress has its work cut out—strengthening the economy, fighting a war, creating a prescription drug benefit for our Nation's seniors. These are just a few of the important pieces of business before us this year. But the problem of the uninsured will not go away—to the contrary, the ranks of the uninsured are growing by millions every year.

A crisis of this magnitude is going to require fundamental change, either through a series of incremental steps, such as helping lower income Americans buy insurance or by spreading insurance risk, or by adopting a bold new

approach, such as that advocated by Senator BREAUX.

We in Congress should consider it a moral imperative to help everyone get access to affordable health coverage.

The number of uninsured people in America is an outrage, and every unnecessary death is a tragedy. If 18,000 Americans died in terrorist incidents each year, there would be widespread outrage.

Yet tens of thousands of uninsured Americans are at risk of dying each year from cancers diagnosed too late, or stroke from uncontrolled high blood pressure. These can be slow, painful deaths.

They are preventable deaths. We can help prevent these deaths. We should help prevent these deaths. With the help of my colleagues, we will help prevent these deaths by committing ourselves to substantial reform this congress.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HISTORIC DEERFIELD CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

• Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, 2002 marked the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of Historic Deerfield. Founded in 1952 by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Needham Flynt of Greenwich, Crt, the western Massachusetts museum complex is located within the 330-year-old village of Deerfield, called "the gem of rural New England" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Cited often as the best documented small community in America, Deerfield attracts scholars, curators, and students to study the history of New England using the village's rich manuscript and research holdings. And, tourists and travelers from throughout the world encounter the story of early America in the parlors and kitchens of Deer Field's old houses and along its mile-long thoroughfare simply called, "The Street."

Surrounded by more than 1,000 acres of actively farmed meadows, Historic Deer Field's museum houses and decorative art galleries are filled with more than 30,000 objects made or used in America between 1650 and 1850. This carefully preserved community of 18th and 19th century houses and the renowned collections of antiques within them are framed by working farms in a quintessential New England village that travelers are delighted to discover.

In 1936 Henry and Helen Flynt enrolled their son at Deerfield Academy, a college preparatory school founded in 1797. The couple was amazed at the remarkable but fragile state of preservation of the village's houses and buildings dating back to the early 18th century. Many were ghosts of their former selves, but still lived in by descendants of the proud families that had survived the infamous Deerfield Massacre of 1704. In those years preceding World